16. Clearance by Ministry of Environment and Forests of all projects above a certain size and in certain fragile areas.

Import of Substandard Wheat

519. SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA :
SHRI MAHESH KUMAR M. KANODIA :

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have recently imported wheat from Canada and Australia;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether the imported wheat is substandard; and

(d) if so, the action taken against the persons found quilty ?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Government have decided to import upto 2 million tonnes of wheat to augment its domestic availability. In pursuance of the decision, the State Trading Corporation of India have so far contracted for import of 16.75 lakh tonnes of wheat from Australia, Canada and Argentina at an estimated total C&F value of approximately us$ 290 million. A quantity of 4.36 lakh tonnes of wheat has arrived at Indian Ports upto 20.2.97.

Adequate precautions have been taken to ensure that the imported wheat conforms to the parameters prescribed in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and the phytosanitary and quarantine norms laid down by the Govt. of India. As per the terms of the contract, the wheat to be shipped has to undergo pre-shipment quality inspection by the Govt. agencies in Canada and Australia, and by internationally reputed quality surveyors in the case of Argentina. Recently, it has also been decided to depute joint teams of Food Corporation of India (FCI), State Trading Corporation of India (STC) and Quality Experts from the Ministry of Food to Australia, Canada and Argentina for pre-shipment inspection of quality.

(d) Does not arise.

Support Prices of Ginger and Cardamom

520. SHRI BHIM PRASAD DAHAL : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have any plans to fix up support price for the ginger and cardamom;

(b) whether the Government have received any request from any State Government in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the reaction of the Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) The Government is fixing the minimum support prices (MSP) of all major agricultural commodities. The other commodities, mostly horticultural, including Ginger and Cardamom are covered under the Market Intervention scheme (MIS). The MIS operates at the request of the State Governments where a specified quantity; is purchased at a mutually agreed price and the losses, if any, are borne equally by the Centre and the State.

(b) No such proposal under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for ginger and cardamom has been received from any State Government.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Centre States Relations

521. SHRI SUDHIR GIRI : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to bring suitable changes in the Centre-States relations in so far as financial matters are involved;

(b) whether the National Development Council considered recently the different aspects of the problem,

(c) if so, the results thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) to (d) One of the items considered by the Standing Committee of the Inter-state Council in its meeting held on 15.1.1997 was to review and update the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State financial relations especially the devolution of financial powers from the Central Government to the State Governments.It was decided in the meeting that the State Governments and the members of the Standing Committee would send their views on this subject including the 'Alternate Scheme of Devolution of Share in Central Taxes to States'.

2. In the Approach paper to the Ninth Plan, it has been proposed to allow greater autonomy and freedom to the States in drawing up their plans. It has also been proposed to transfer most of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) to the States alongwith resources. In the meeting of the National Development Council held on 16.1.1997, these proposals were generally endorsed any many Chief Ministers demanded that most of the CSS should be transfered to the States alongwith corresponding resources. An excercise is underway in the Planning Commission to work out the details regarding transfer of CSS in the phased manner.